

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

105th Congress
2nd Session

Vote No. 172

June 24, 1998, 8:01 p.m.
Page S-6981 Temp. Record

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION/Moratorium on Gender Policy Changes

SUBJECT: National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1999 . . . S. 2057. Levin (for Snowe/Cleland) amendment No. 2979 to the Brownback amendment No. 2978.

ACTION: AMENDMENT AGREED TO, 56-37

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. 2057, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1999, will authorize \$270.6 billion in budget authority for national defense programs (this amount is equal to the requested level, and is in accordance with the budget agreement of last year). In real terms, spending will be \$2.9 billion less than last year. As a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), defense spending will be just 3.1 percent, which will be the lowest level of defense spending since 1940. Defense spending has declined steadily since 1986, when it was 6.5 percent of GDP.

The Brownback amendment would require separate housing for male and female recruits during military basic training.

The Snowe/Cleland amendment would strike all after the first word of the Brownback amendment and would substitute language barring any change in policies or official practices regarding the separation or integration of Members of the Armed Forces on the basis of gender if those policies or practices were within the scope of policies and practices under review by the Commission on Military Training and Gender-Related Issues and if that commission had not yet terminated.

NOTE: After the vote, the underlying amendment, as amended, was adopted by voice vote.

Those favoring the amendment contended:

We have offered the Snowe/Cleland amendment as a compromise amendment. Our inclination, based on what we now know about this issue, would be to vote against the underlying amendment. However, rather than follow that course, we have offered an amendment that would require us and the military to wait until the congressional commission that has been appointed to study this subject issued its findings. We are interested in hearing that expert testimony before we make any final decision.

(See other side)

YEAS (56)			NAYS (37)			NOT VOTING (7)	
Republicans (18 or 35%)	Democrats (38 or 93%)		Republicans (34 or 65%)	Democrats (3 or 7%)		Republicans (3)	Democrats (4)
Bennett	Biden	Kerrey	Abraham	Hatch	Byrd	Helms- ^{2AN}	Akaka- ²
Burns	Bingaman	Kerry	Allard	Hutchinson	Conrad	Roth- ²	Baucus- ²
Chafee	Boxer	Kohl	Ashcroft	Hutchison	Hollings	Specter- ³	Glenn- ²
Cochran	Breaux	Landrieu	Bond	Inhofe			Rockefeller- ²
Collins	Bryan	Lautenberg	Brownback	Kyl			
D'Amato	Bumpers	Leahy	Campbell	Lott			
Domenici	Cleland	Levin	Coats	McCain			
Gregg	Daschle	Lieberman	Coverdell	McConnell			
Hagel	Dodd	Mikulski	Craig	Murkowski			
Jeffords	Dorgan	Moseley-Braun	DeWine	Nickles			
Kempthorne	Durbin	Moynihan	Enzi	Roberts			
Lugar	Feingold	Murray	Faircloth	Santorum			
Mack	Feinstein	Reed	Frist	Sessions			
Smith, Gordon	Ford	Reid	Gorton	Shelby			
Snowe	Graham	Robb	Gramm	Smith, Bob			
Stevens	Harkin	Sarbanes	Grams	Thompson			
Thomas	Inouye	Torricelli	Grassley	Warner			
Thurmond	Johnson	Wellstone					
	Kennedy	Wyden					

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

1—Official Business
2—Necessarily Absent
3—Illness
4—Other

SYMBOLS:

AY—Announced Yea
AN—Announced Nay
PY—Paired Yea
PN—Paired Nay

The Brownback amendment has been offered due to concern that having men and women recruits in the same barracks inevitably results in widespread sexual activity, much of it coercive. We certainly do not condone any coercive activity, and we agree that the military, for reasons of unit cohesion, does not want any bonds forming between particular unit members that will cause differential treatment that could affect military performance. The question before us, therefore, is not whether anyone condones sexual activity between male and female recruits--it is how best to prevent it.

The Department of Defense appointed a commission to study this issue, and that commission, led by our former colleague Senator Kassebaum-Baker, recommended separate barracks for basic trainees. The Secretary of Defense, on the advice of his military commanders, rejected that recommendation. Each of the services was allowed to decide for itself whether it would house male and female recruits in the same barracks. Only the Marines chose separate housing. The other services chose to keep separate sleeping, bathroom, and shower arrangements, but to share other housing areas for recruits. Those services decided that because men and women would serve together in the field, they should be trained together, and that the way to deal with problems was with greater security rather than with separation. They are currently working to provide better security for the segregated areas of their barracks, including by adding alarms and locks to all of the door and window entry points. We are confident that these measures will reduce problems.

Last year, before the Kassebaum-Baker Commission issued its recommendations, Congress appointed its own commission because conservative Members were fearful that the Kassebaum-Baker Commission had a liberal bias. Now that it has come up with conservative recommendations, though, our colleagues are not interested in waiting for the findings of their own commission. They are fearful that their own commission may issue findings that are less favorable to their biases than the findings that were issued by the Kassebaum-Baker Commission. In response, we note that we were willing to support creating a second expert commission at a time when it was thought that the existing commission would support our viewpoint; our colleagues should likewise be willing to wait for their own commission to complete its work. We therefore urge our colleagues to support the Snowe/Cleland amendment as a substitute for the Brownback amendment.

Those opposing the amendment contended:

All that the Snowe/Cleland amendment would accomplish would be delay in the implementation of a change that should be made. The Kassebaum-Baker Commission, which included several members with liberal biases, unanimously recommended that male and female recruits should be housed in separate barracks during basic training. They made that recommendation after questioning more than 1,000 trainees, 500 drill instructors, 300 first-term service members, and 275 supervisors. They found that there is a "high frequency" of sexual relations during basic training between male and female recruits, and that the problem is exacerbated in mixed-gender barracks. During basic training, recruits are put under great physical and mental strain for 9 weeks as they are taught to conform to exacting and high military standards. When young men and women in this intense situation are put in the same housing, sexual activity is of course going to occur. One study last November found that women especially were susceptible to sexual pressures when under stress from basic training. The services that have adopted this new policy of mixed-gender barracks have decided that they will control matters by setting up alarms at all the entry points to the segregated sleeping areas in their barracks. The Army invited us to tour such barracks to prove how well their alarms worked. We went, and, unlike the top brass, we asked the recruits how the alarms worked, and were told that they were regularly and easily evaded, and that sexual activity was rampant. We know also that the Army Inspector General's special inspection from July 22, 1997, found that "Many of the first sergeants interviewed indicated that trainee-trainee consensual sex occurred quite often, but felt the chain of command was reluctant to enforce the installation regulation." The Army brass, and other top military commanders, do not want to hear that their policy is failing because it is the policy that is supported by President Clinton. Like always, the military is saying that the best military policy just so happens to agree with the political policy of the current President. The only noteworthy feature of the current military policy is that the Marines have dared to oppose President Clinton by refusing to go along with his desire for mixed-gender barracks. We frankly think that our colleagues are being all too willing to gloss over the problem. In 1995, the Department of Defense conducted a sexual harassment survey and found that 55 percent of the women in the Army reported being sexually harassed within the previous year, 11 percent reported being pressured for sexual favors, and 4 percent reported being assaulted or raped. The surveys and reports that we have seen all indicate that the problems are more severe in basic training when male and female recruits are housed in the same barracks. It is true that Congress appointed a commission to look at a huge number of issues, including mixed-gender barracks, but we should not use that fact as an excuse to delay acting. All of the available evidence clearly shows that there should be separate barracks, so we should demand them now. If the congressional commission reaches a different conclusion, then we should revisit the issue. At this point, though, we are not operating in a vacuum--we know that having male and female recruits in the same barracks causes problems. We urge our colleagues to oppose this amendment, and to vote in favor of the underlying Brownback amendment.